3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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105 No cash crop had been introduced in the area at the time I studied it. In order to get a cash income Bemba men left the territory to look for work in the mining areas to the south. Between 40 and 60 per cent of males were absent from the area in 1931. Although this phenomenon probably only dates from the nineteen twenties it has already had such marked effects on the marriage system of the Bemba that it is reflected in the chisungu rite.

The environment of the Bemba is also responsible for those health conditions which are the source of many of their anxieties. Malaria is endemic and the figures for pulmonary disease were very high during my visit. The mortality of children of under three years of age was very severe. This was thought by medical experts to be due to the fact that children had no milk at all after they were weaned, usually between their second and third year; also to infections resulting in dysentery. Death in childbirth was not uncommon. Girls seemed to bear their first child immediately after puberty, at about 15 or 16 years. They received little skilled care either before or after childbirth, and the wide dispersal of the villages made it difficult for the Government to provide European medical facilities. The traditional processes of delivery were exhausting in the extreme to the mother and it was almost impossible for a Bemba midwife to secure conditions that her European counterpart would consider clean.

Bemba women seemed to accept the period of food shortage to which they had become accustomed but they were obsessed with the risks that their children ran and their magic was very largely concerned with rites designed to save their babies' health. The chisungu ceremony is a case in point.

IDEOLOGY AND DOGMA

769 The Bemba attribute their blessings and misfortunes to super-
● 775 natural agencies, which are set in motion either by persons, dead
789 or living, or by impersonal magic forces, good or evil. They do not believe in the dogma of chance.[1]

769 (*a*) The Personal beings include: (i) *the spirits of ancestors*
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[1] I owe this term to Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, 1945.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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(*mipashi*) mainly of the matrilineal line, which can be addressed at spirit shrines, the burial places of dead chiefs or in the huts of their individual descendants. They can also be born again with each new child, who acquires a *mupashi* as a guardian spirit, either from his mother's or his father's line, or from the royal dynasty of the territory in which he is born. These guardian spirits can also be inherited, and each dead man or woman is succeeded by a close relative of the same sex who acquires his or her name and guardian spirit.

(ii) *Malignant spirits*, (*fiwa*) who are the spirits of those who died with a feeling of injury because of some violent death, or who left the world with a sense of grievance. *Fiwa* return to strike their descendants with illness or misfortune.

(iii) *Living persons* who can produce good fortune by blessing (*ukupaala amate*), which they do chiefly by calling on the ancestral spirits to which they have special right of address; or cursing, which they do through some less specified evil force. The blessings of a chief or a man in authority are particularly potent because of the great spirits such powerful persons have access to. The head of a matrilineage, or an important member of it can also bless in this way. A great social personage who has been injured or not given his due, is feared because he may withhold the blessings of the spirits, or actually pronounce curses (*ukutipa* or *ukulapishya*). The curse is specially important in relation to procreation and childbirth, since the malevolent wishes of the father's sister can produce barrenness in the woman, or impotence in the man. This is described as 'the great curse'. There are, however, a number of curses which can be used by injured people, who 'throw lightning' or are said to be able to 'throw lions', or who can threaten to curse, if their property is stolen, or when specially distressed by the treatment they have received.

(*b*) Impersonal forces include (i) *Magic* in general (*bwanga*), which is the force contained in the leaves, roots or barks of various trees or shrubs and a number of activating agencies (*fishimba*), such as parts of animals or human beings, which can be used by the specialist magician (*yanga*) for beneficent purposes (health, the production of crops, fertility and success) or for harmful purposes (illness, death or crop failure). *Buloshi* is evil magic or

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firmly convinced that the conduct of each partner to a marriage has a magical effect on the health of the other, and even on that of a third party who commits adultery with one or the other.

If a man dies, his spirit is thought to linger round the body of his widow, and to be a potential danger to anyone subsequently marrying her. The same is true of a widower on the death of his wife. It seems clear that the clan of the man or woman is involved, since, unless the wife is inherited, a substitute from the dead partner's clan is required to sleep with the surviving partner in order to fetch his or her spirit back to the clan.

One could interpret this requirement by saying that the spirit of a dead Bemba is thought to haunt the living if the departed man or woman has been defrauded of his or her rights. If this interpretation is correct, it can be assumed that a man who sleeps with the widow before the necessary ceremony of 'taking off the death' has taken place is regarded as defrauding the dead man of the marital rights he had acquired. The clan brother who sleeps with the widow to take off the death which lingers on or around her presumably acts as the social equivalent of the dead man and not on behalf of the clan as a whole; the matrilineal clan or lineage does not normally act as a corporate group with regard to the marriage of one of its male members, although the woman's lineage, in the person of her mother's brother, does assume such a position of control.

Should it be objected that the initial rights of husbands over wives in Bemba society are much less substantial than those of husbands in the patrilineal bride-wealth tribes, this must be admitted; yet in Bemba society, perhaps just because of the lack of durable property in which status can be expressed, there is a tremendous insistence upon points of precedence and honour, and fights over what seem to us to be trivial claims and dues. So the apparent contradiction between the strength of the mystic links between spouses and the weakness of the economic ties between them is not so surprising a paradox in terms of Bemba culture as it would be in our own. Moreover however uncertain a husband's rights as father may be, his sexual rights over his wife are never questioned. It is these which are at issue in the ceremony of 'taking off the death'. These interpretations, however, are guesswork;

pants from the contemplation of their loss he makes jokes at the expense of the dead man and behaves in a fashion which in other circumstances would be considered outrageous and would not be tolerated. 764

Kazembes considered themselves as potentially immortal; thus the death of a Kazembe was attributed to neglect of magical precautions against witchcraft.(1) According to Pinto, slaves and wives of a dead Kazembe were sacrificed and a ten-day period of authorized licence followed during which robberies were allowed.(2) 754 643 782

It was believed that the living and the dead could communicate. Life after death resembled that led while alive.(3) 775

RELIGIOUS AND MAGICAL BELIEFS AND RITUAL

The concept of the high-god Lesa is common to the Bemba-speaking peoples. *Lesa*, the creator, is regarded rather as a nature force than a personal deity and is not the object of an organised cult. He manifests himself in thunder, lightning, and the rainbow and can kill by lightning or epidemics, but generally interferes little. 776

The *ngulu*, nature spirits residing in animals, trees, stones, hills, caves, ponds, waterfalls, can bring good weather and crops and are prayed to in an emergency. This cult is of non-Lunda origin and has probably come from the Chishinga, Lungu and Bemba country. Most of the dwelling-places of these spirits are found on the escarpment hills and on the plateau. The *mfumu ya mipashi* (chiefs of spirits), which can enter and possess people making them dance, are local deities whose beneficient activity is confined to the village or district. [177]

When the general well-being of the community was concerned the spirits of dead Kazembes, *masamos*, were consulted and presented with offerings of cassava, beer and goats. Kazembes were buried at a place north-east of the old capital with which it was connected by a broad pathway(4) still discernible. Each had a shrine which was tended by a guardian-priest, *mwine masamo*,(5) whose office was hereditary. These keepers of the royal graves sought the advice of the oracle when war was contemplated and invoked the assistance of the spirits.(6) The River Lualaba, in which Kazembe the founder of the dynasty rests, was held in veneration. Processions went there annually at harvesting time. It is said that Keleka was the first Kazembe who failed to lead the procession in person, and the famine and smallpox epidemic which later occurred were attributed to his negligence.(7) The Kazembe is said to have been the highest religious authority.(8) 769 643 764 778 731

Carved wooden figures representing dead ancestors (*nkisi*) were kept in special huts and received offerings of beer, cassava, flour, hemp and tobacco.(9) Kazembe had several such figures, some named after dead chiefs, which were carried before the army in battle.(10) 778 532 769

(1) Valdez, II, p.242.
(2) Burton, p.128.
(3) Valdez, op.cit., p.243.
(4) Valdez, II, p.231.
(5) Burton, p.103.
(6) Valdez, op.cit., p.248.
(7) Valdez, II, p.257.
(8) ibid., p.243.
(9) Livingstone, I, p.353.
(10) ibid.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

continuity of the mother's line of ancestors which is the basis of legal identification with her descent group.[1] A royal princess might even produce an heir by a slave father in the old days without lowering her child's prestige. The relationship between brother and sister, which is a very close one, legally and ritually, is based on the fact that the two were born from one womb, and in the case of the royal family it appears to be equally strong when the two are children of different fathers. These theories of procreation account, not only for the matrilineal descent of the Bemba, on which succession to chieftainship is based, but also for the rank accorded to the royal princesses as mothers of chiefs, and the headmanships and other positions of authority given them.

The Bemba dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living is also of the utmost importance as a basis for political authority. The spirit of a dead man (*umupashi*, plur. *imipashi*) is thought to survive as a guardian presence associated with the land or village site formerly inhabited, and as a spiritual protector of different individuals born in the same lineage group and called by the same name. The *imipashi* of dead chiefs become tutelary deities of the land they ruled over, and responsible for its fertility and the welfare of its inhabitants. They can be approached by the successor to the chieftainship at various sacred spots in the territory and at the sacred relic shrines (*babenye*) in his own village. A chief is said to be powerful because he 'has great *imipashi*!' It is for this reason he is described as the *umwine calo*, 'owner of the land', and it is important to note that in every case the most important *imipashi* and the most sacred relics are those of the first chiefs to enter the land, or the first occupants of a chieftainship.

This dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living inhabitants of a district, or the members of a descent group, is very similar to the general Bantu pattern. But the Bemba belief in the social identification between the dead man and his appointed successor seems to me to be particularly complete. It is the basis of the belief as to the supernatural influence exerted by the chief in his own person as distinct from his direct approach to the spirits

[1] The patrilineal tribes on the Nyassaland border consider the Bemba theory of procreation as entirely ridiculous. One Ngoni expressed his contempt, thus: 'If I have a bag and put money in it, the money belongs to me and not to the bag. But the Bemba say a man puts semen into a woman and yet the child belongs to her and not to him!'

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

in prayer. When a man or woman dies, his or her social personality must be immediately perpetuated by a successor who passes through a special ritual (*ukupyanika*) and thus acquires the name, the symbols of succession (a bow for a man and a girdle for the woman), and the *umupashi* of the dead man. By this social identification, a man assumes the latter's position in the kinship-group, uses the same kinship terms and, in the case of a chief, it is almost impossible to tell when a man is describing incidents which took place in his own life or those of an ancestor two or three generations dead. So important is this social perpetuation of the dead considered that immediately after a death, before the successor has finally been appointed, a small boy or girl, usually a maternal grandchild, is chosen to inherit the name of the deceased temporarily (*ukunwa menshi*, 'to drink the water'). He or she is given some small piece of the latter's property and thereafter addressed as grandfather or grandmother, or whatever the right kinship term may be.

In the same way, a chief, once he has succeeded to the name, the spirit, and the sacred relics of his predecessor, has magic influence over the productive capacity of his whole territory. His ill health or death, his pleasure or displeasure, his blessings or curses, can affect the prosperity of the people, and even his sex life reacts on the state of the community.[1] For a chief to break a sex taboo is an act which may cause calamity to the whole people, and the rites by which he is purified after sexual contacts form one of the most important elements in the politico-religious ceremonial requiring the participation of thirty or forty hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) in the case of the paramount. Conversely, legitimate sex intercourse, especially as prescribed on certain ritual occasions, may actually be a health-giving influence. Any headman has a certain degree of supernatural influence in his own village as the successor to his predecessor's *umupashi*, but a chief has considerably more. For all these reasons, ritual precautions guard the sacred person of a chief. Special taboos must be kept to preserve the ritual purity of the ruler's sacred fire, and his sacred

[1] There are rumours that chiefs were throttled by their hereditary councillors when they were obviously sick unto death, for fear they took 'the land' into the grave with them. This information was sent me by Mr. T. Fox-Pitt after I had left the country and was afterwards checked by Mr. Godfrey Wilson. In fact it is probable that in the old days the Bemba chiefs would fall under Frazer's definition of a 'divine king'.

614 has finally been settled the *banungwe* are again essential. They have also to brew the beer for
616 the feast held for the kinsmen on such occasions.
764 Besides these necessary ritual functions which people perform for their *banungwe*, they also taunt them at the funeral, irritate them and make jokes. Some of the opposite clan members must follow the burial party to the grave. The moment the body has been buried and earth piled over it in a mound, one of the *banungwe* breaks the silence with a sudden shout. He rails at the mourning family, mocks at them, and accuses them of having buried a live man. He calls out, 'You, there! Why do you bury a man 'who is alive? Listen to him knocking down 'there! Can't you hear him? He is asking 'for some snuff. You enemies, you! (the usual 'term applied by *banungwe* to each other). See 'what things you do! You go and bury live 'men!' The taunts are, of course, expected, but were received, at each funeral I attended, with a kind of horrified silence, till suddenly the tension broke, and the mourners who had been wailing for some six hours without break, began sheepishly to laugh, and broke into an unceremonious run back to the village, still pursued by shouts from the irrepressible *banungwe*, 'Look 'out you now! He has risen (*Kubuka*) from 'the grave, that man you buried. He is coming 'after you asking for porridge.'[8] Older natives say that the mourners were beaten by their *banungwe* in the old days and add that the latter [428] were also responsible for handing over to the heirs the insignia of inheritance—the bow of the dead man, or the belt of the woman—but I never saw either of these customs practised myself.

614 As ritually expressed the traditional attitude between *banungwe* is therefore one of hostility,
616 and yet, as the complementary nature of the clan names imply, one of reciprocal service.
522 *Banungwe* regularly address each other as 'You, 'my enemy!' (*Mwe mulwani mwe!*) and delight in laughter at the habits of the objects, whether animal or plant, of the opposite clan. A member of the crocodile clan will scoff at one of the fish people and deride him as, 'You! You are just 'my food ration!' (*poso*, the word used for a government ration given to employees). 'Come 'over here! I want to give you to my wife to 'cook.' The *munungwe* of the fish clan retaliates

[775]

[8] The word *kubuka* is that used for a dead man's spirit which returns to haunt the living (a *cisiu*).

[p. 190(B)]

10: Barnes M-5 (ca. 1920) 1922 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Survival after Death among the Ba-Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia. *By The Rev. H. Barnes.* 26

One is familiar with the idea that such immortality, or rather survival, as forms part of the belief of the Bantu is only limited, and that there is probably no idea of immortality or indefinite survival. A curious belief and practice illustrating and confirming this came to my notice lately here in N. E. Rhodesia, among the Ba-Bemba. I was making inquiry of some Christian teachers of quite limited education as to the significance of the word "*mupashi*," which is sometimes used in translation into Chi-Bemba to render the English "spirit" or the Greek πνεῦμα. I was told that "*mupashi*" means the disembodied spirit that parts from the body at death, but that it would be wrong to speak of the spirit of a living person as "*mupashi*" or to apply the word to any spiritual being that had never been embodied. Also it would not be the right word to use in such phrases as "giving up the ghost," "commending the spirit." In these latter phrases the word "*moyo*," connoting rather the vital spark, and not anything personal or individual, would appear to be appropriate.

The "*mupashi*," when it leaves the body, goes far and near, seeking among people of the same clan as the person from whom it has come, until it finds a newborn babe as yet unnamed. The *mupashi* suffers under the disadvantage of being invisible and incapable of producing audible sounds, and in these parts it has not yet learnt to communicate by means of tables or planchette. It must find a medium who will be able to interpret its wishes and convey them to the right address. But what is its message and how does it attract attention? Its desire is to secure the transmission of the name borne by its last owner, so that that name may not die out and with it the memory of its holder and the existence of the *mupashi*. The *mupashi* is thus seen to be struggling for its own survival. It calls attention to itself and its desire by making the newborn babe of its family cry and cry until its parents in despair send for the *sing'anga* or diviner. The *sing'anga* is able to understand and communicate with the *mupashi*, but almost as awkwardly as our own table turners

* Thurston, "Tribes and Castes of Southern India, 1909"; Iyer, "Cochin Tribes and Castes," 1909; Nanjunadayya, "Ethnographic Survey of Mysore."

10: Barnes M-5 (ca. 1920) 1922 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

775 787 553 He is quick to know that the child's crying is caused by the *mupashi* who wants to confer a name, but he can only find out which name the *mupashi* is interested in by going over the names of the great men of the family. The name may be that of a quite remote ancestor, although the *mupashi* is but recently freed. The process of carrying on the name may have begun long ago in the interest of some specially memorable man or woman. The child, by the way, may be of either sex. The *mupashi* will indicate that the right name has been pronounced by leaving the babe in peace. When the babe ceases to cry at one of the names offered, the *sing'anga* announces that the child is to bear that name, and the mothers see to it that it is so. If all the bearers of a name so conferred die out, the name is forgotten, the ancestor no longer survives even as a *mupashi*, and a full stop is reached in that chain.

[845] The new-born child is always or usually named in this way. In the case of twins the first-born will have a name so given, but the second will be called simply "Twin," "Pundu."

H. BARNES.

[42]